

HEAVY LOSSES BY BURNING OF THE HALL BUILDING



The Wreck at Daybreak.

WHAT WAS the magnificent Hall building at Fort and King streets is now a complete wreck. A mass of charred walls, standing only one story high in Fort street, a tangle of beams and columns filling the basement level of the street, charred timbers and broken bricks along the sidewalk, mark the spot where stood the building which occupied one of the old business houses in the city.

The losses are confined principally to the firms, there being several neighbors who suffered from the breaking of windows and from slight fires close to the walls. The principal losers and their losses are as follows:

Loss Insurance.	
Hall & Son, Ltd.	\$31,000
Lewers & Cooke	20,000
	27,500

The fire which wrought the havoc was one of the fiercest and most rapid in the history of Honolulu. First it appeared, and within an hour it had reduced the building to a mass of ruins. The origin of the fire is a matter of conjecture, but as there were no live fires in the building at the time, the best theory is that of spontaneous combustion. In some of the oil-soaked rags or rags used about the oil department or in the bicycle rooms, the destruction must be attributed.

The fire was discovered by the newsboys of the Advertiser. The lads had gathered about 4 o'clock, within an hour of the time the fire broke out. It first appeared, and damaged surrounding structures and stocks before the entire department got control of the blaze. The origin of the fire is a matter of conjecture, but as there were no live fires in the building at the time, the best theory is that of spontaneous combustion.

When at first seen the flames were about three feet high in the ground floor. Whether or not they had taken their way up the elevator shaft, no one knows. It was in that end of the building that the stocks of oil, the principal cause of the fire, were kept. There the flames were kindled, and the floors, though kept as clean as possible, were more or less covered with the leakage and loss of oil. There, too, were kept the rags and rags with which the oil containers were cleaned and the floors wiped clean. It is now presumed that the ignition of some of these pieces of cloth caused the fire and the proximity of the inflammable induced rapid spread through the building.

It was not more than a quarter-hour after the alarm had been turned in that the interior of the structure was a mass of flames. The firemen had to turn their attention to adjoining buildings. The engine had been disposed upon the street at the nearest point to the burning building, and the hose was put at the end of the street. An attempt was made to get the engine down Fort street, but the flames which poured from the windows were too much for it. The engine was not drawn in past the burning building. The third was put in the street east of the fire and with the hose of the adjacent structures was used. From the firehouse of the Lewers & Cooke the hose was made from that side. The Fort street store of the same

firm was seen to be on fire and two streams were put on the roof to prevent the flames getting a foothold. Two more streams of water were kept playing upon the buildings across the street, at one time both of them being concentrated upon the Hobron Drug Company establishment.

Once the alarm had been sounded the streets began to be filled with spectators. The fire was most brilliant and lighted up the entire district, putting the moon out of business, and attracting the attention of people who did not hear the alarm whistle. The crowds began to come in singles, couples and then in swarms, until the police, gathered from all over the city, had work cut out for them in keeping back the people who, eager to see, were for getting into the front row all the time. There were picturesque costumes, men who by day are the glass of fashion appearing in pajamas and trousers without coats and in slippers, while a holoiku did duty for street attire for many a woman who wears it only in the house otherwhiles.

There was a most brilliant spectacle while the flames were leaping high above the buildings, but soon after the fire got to its highest there were a series of explosions which drove back the people. In the Waikiki end of the building were kept the various stores of cartridges, and these began to explode with rapidity. When the plate-glass windows fell out from the extreme heat, there was a clear field for the target practice, and the cases of shells began to pour a fire upon the walls of the burning building and the surrounding ones as well. Many cartridges were thrown out into the street without exploding, by the force of the explosions of others, and all day yesterday there were crowds of lads and men gathering them as souvenirs. One ball went through the window of the new McIntyre block, others through glass on Fort street, while many persons in the crowd said they heard the whizzing of bullets about them as they stood and watched the blaze.

With a crash the King street wall of the building fell about 4:40 o'clock. There had been burning a fierce fire all the time along that side of the building, the force of the flames seeming to be mauka, as there was no wind blowing. The flames having been turned off for the occasion, thus saving perhaps the entire block. The firemen had seen the warring of the wall under the vigor of the flames and there was none of them along the side of the building. Bricks and terra cotta were strewn across King street, some of the fragments being thrown into the enclosure around the McIntyre building. This marked the top-notch of the fire, as from that time it was declining, the fuel which time it was exhausted, and the efforts of the firemen being rewarded in the fact that the flames were set for it.

The best work was done by the firemen on the Lewers & Cooke building, where several times there was a fierce blaze. One-half the roof of the building was destroyed, and in fighting the flames the water was poured through the roof and down through the floors, destroying much of the stock. There was a shortage of ladders, the department not being regularly supplied with any at all, and there was much delay in getting to the roof by the firemen. Those had to be drawn up to the roof by a hand-line let down by a fireman who had stumbled up the stairs and made his way out on the top any way possible. There was some valuable time lost in this way, but it was not enough to have enabled the firemen to prevent the damaging of this building to some extent.

There were times when it appeared that the Lewers & Cooke block would take fire, and once the flames had secured a foothold there, there would have been little hope of saving the building, as there was such a stock of

papers, paints and oils as would have furnished a most spectacular display. There was some damage done by the flames in the upper story of the building, but this was very little in comparison with what was wrought by the water. The stock of high-class shelf hardware was very susceptible to the water and this was deluged by the two streams which played through the roof for an hour. Wall papers were soaked and rendered useless and bushes and other light goods were put out of business entirely.

Across Fort street the fire swept several times, setting fire to exposed woodwork and by the heat breaking through all the plate-glass windows. At the Golden Rule Bazaar, where the glass was filled with books, the glass was broken early in the morning and the volumes were often soaked by the water from the continuous streams which were played upon the various store fronts. Loss there will be in the neighborhood of \$350, the greatest part of this being upon the plate-glass windows.

The Hobron Drug Company lost more heavily than any other on that side of Fort street, as the fire was so hot that the windows were broken and then the flames attacked the light stock in boxes in the second story of the building. The clerks who had arrived before this occurred pushed the burning stock out of the windows without waiting to give the engine a chance to throw water upon it, but then came the deluge from the streams and there were no windows to offer resistance to it. There was more damage done by water there as well, the entire amount approaching \$1,000, about half on goods in stock and the other half on the glass and woodwork.

The McIntyre building, in course of construction across King street, was several times on fire in the window casings, but there was always a stream of water ready, so that it did not get

headway at any time. The adjoining buildings, which are occupied by the Bulletin, as well as badly scorched and the windows broken, but no serious damage was done. By the hard work of the firemen there was not a chance for the fire to get in among the piles of lumber in the yards, so that the danger of a general conflagration was minimized from the start.

From the moment the alarm and the light upon the sky called so many persons down town, there was a roof party going on all over the district in close contiguity to the burning storehouse. There was a continuous performance, too, for there were many buckets of water thrown upon the blazing sparks which fell in a rain while the fire was at its height. This was done not only in the immediate vicinity but all over the district for a block in every direction of the fire there were burning sparks falling and active work done to prevent a lodgment. On the roof of the building occupied by the Advertiser men were engaged in putting out such sparks when there occurred a most unfortunate accident. Mr. Gaston J. Boisse, the oarsman, went up to assist in this work, but missing his footing, fell through a skylight. He alighted upon a desk, which carried a sharp paper file. This he struck with his right arm, the point of the file passing through his wrist, and sticking out on the other side. He was attended by Dr. Wayson, who found that he had sustained severe bruises, being unconscious for some time, in addition to the wound in the wrist. After his wounds were dressed he was conveyed to his home. Mr. Boisse is the chief pressman of the Hawaiian Gazette Company.

There were many of the sightseers who took advantage of the movement to the roofs to secure points of vantage from which the fire could be viewed, and so upon almost every housetop there was a party looking down upon the blaze. These stayed,

many of them, until there was no more to be seen, and for most of the good people the day began at 4 o'clock yesterday, and there was no further rest.

The principal loss was that of E. O. Hall & Son, Limited, in whose building the fire broke out. On stock and building the loss will reach something like \$140,000. The building was one which was erected by the firm last year, at a cost of above \$50,000 and fitted for their business at an additional expense of \$10,000. The building was built upon a leased property, the lease having yet eighteen years to run. As soon as the debris can be cleared away the erection of a new building on the old site will begin. The new building was decided upon at a meeting of the board of directors of the company yesterday morning, there being present Messrs. W. W. Hall, E. H. Paris, A. J. Campbell and E. Cartwright. While nothing can be announced definitely concerning the new structure as that which was destroyed yesterday morning, the short life of the lease would render this inadvisable, and the structure, while it may be on the same general plan, will not be so highly ornate. It was decided also, at the meeting, that for the present the retail business of the corporation would be given up and all attention turned to the wholesale division. The firm's warehouse in Allen street is filled with hardware, so that there will be no delays in filling any orders which may come in. The office of the company for the present will be in the rooms over the Hawaiian Trust and Investment Company, but the business in general will be done at the Allen street house. Mr. Hall called the forty employees of the house together at the warehouse yesterday morning and apprised them of the decision of the firm to discontinue the retail business for the present, as there was no available storeroom in which the firm wishes to open out again. He said that the

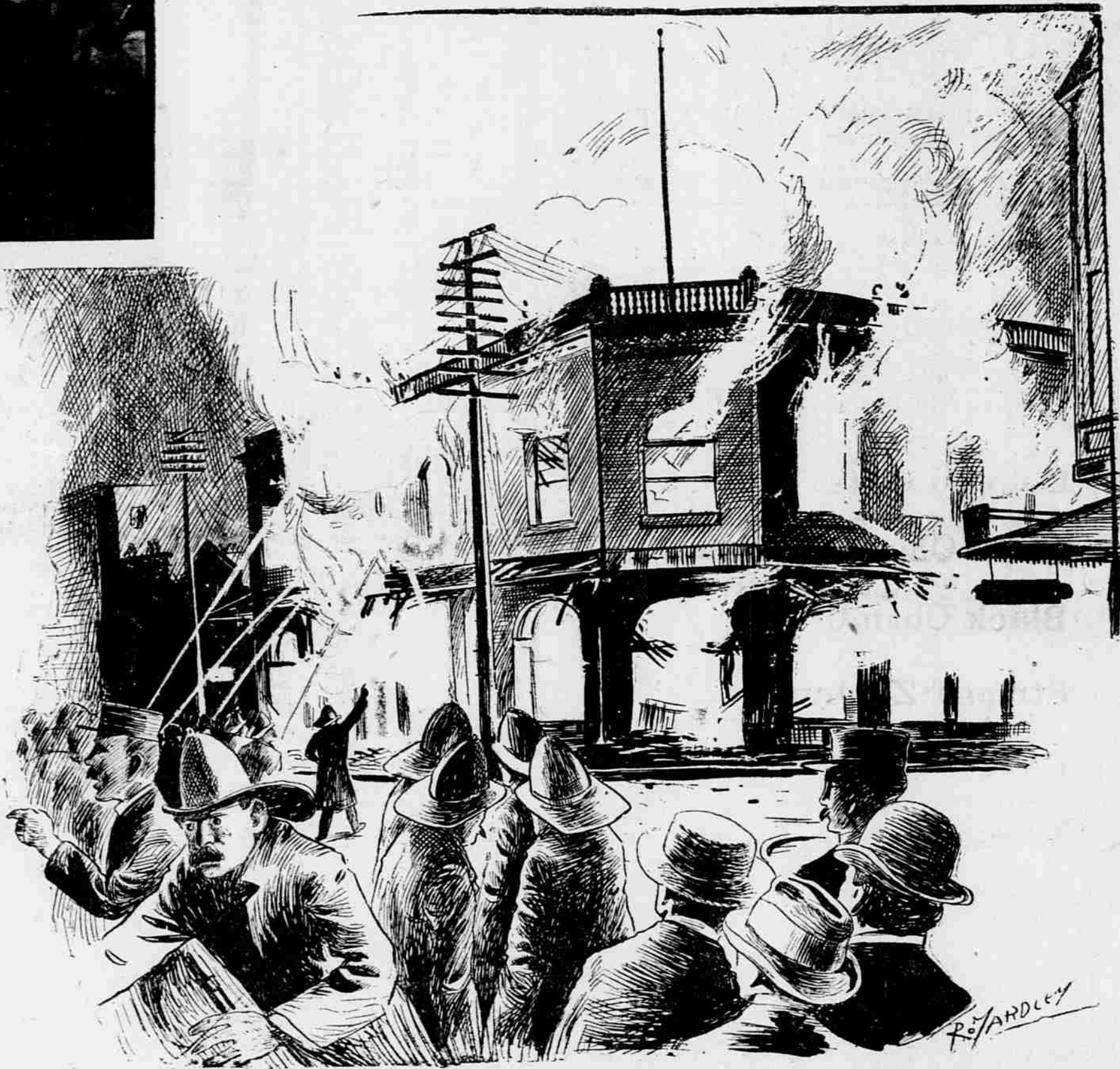
force would be decreased to about eight men, and that the names of those who would be retained would be announced today. In time he hoped to have all the old staff about him once more.

MR. HALL'S STATEMENT.

Mr. Hall said yesterday in discussing the fire: "I have no theory as to its origin upon which I place any weight. Some persons think it might have come from our independent lighting system. There was not a live wire in the place at the time. We had a plant with a gasoline engine. Then we had an auxiliary system with the current from the electric company. But the engine was not running, the electric company had not made its connections, so that there was no way in which there might have been any current which could have caused a fire. The wiring was put in with care and has been overhauled recently. As to gasoline there was none in the house. The gasoline for the engine was stored in a tank which was located outside of the walls, under the pavement. There is a door leading to this vault and you can see not only that the sidewalk is in shape, but as well that the door has not been opened. This would dispose of any theory that there had been a fire from the explosion of gasoline. There may have been a lighted cigarette or cigar in the packing room, though that is improbable.

"We carried no more explosives or oil in stock than the law allows. For instance, we had perhaps less than fifty pounds of powder, not a full box of dynamite and not more than ten cases of kerosene, perhaps not half that amount. We had a large stock of cartridges and these made the noise of the explosions which were heard.

"As to the loss, we had the store fitted up in the finest style, the best store in the city, I think, at a cost of about



Fighting the Fire Soon After it Broke Out.